DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 160 946 CG 012 894

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TITLE Children's Monetary Evaluations of Body Parts as a Function of Sex, Grade, and Race.
PUB DATE Mar 78
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Southeastern Psychological Association (24th, Atlanta, Georgia, March 15-18, 1978)
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EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Age Differences; *Body Image; *Childhood Attitudes; Children; Human Body; Injuries; *Personal Values; Physical Characteristics; *Racial Characteristics; Research Projects; *Sex Differences

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The present study reports ratings of seven body parts as a function of sex, age, and race of child. Subjects were 320 public school children. They were given a sheet of paper with pictures of seven different body parts, and were asked to select from a list of numbers a dollar value for each body part. The instructions suggested that they imagine a part of the body had been damaged in an accident. A multivariate analysis of variance indicated that females value their bodies less than males. There was a significant increase in the body evaluations from the third grade to the sixth grade. Black children placed a significantly higher dollar value on their body parts than did white children. (Author)

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Children's Monetary Evaluations of Body Parts as a Function of Sex, Grade, and Race

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CG012874

Abstract

The present study reports ratings of seven body parts as a function of sex, age, and race of child. Three hundred and twenty public school children were given a sheet of paper with pictures of seven different body parts. They were asked to select from a list of numbers a dollar value for each body part. The instructions suggested that they imagine a part of the body had been damaged in an accident. A multivariate analysis of variance indicated that females value their bodies less than males. There was a significant increase in the body evaluations from the third grade to the sixth grade. Black children placed a significantly higher dollar value on their body parts than did white children.

Children's Monetary Evaluations of Body Parts as a Function of Sex, Grade, and Race

Caskey and Felker (1971) measured the effects of sex stereotypes on male and female children. The children were presented with a list of adjectives of things either "nice to be" or "not nice to be", and they were asked to apply the adjectives to different body types. The females assigned fewer favorable adjectives to their respective body types than did males. Secord and Jourard (1958), and Berscheid, Walster, and Bohrnstedt (1973) found, with adults, that men have more positive feelings about their bodies than do women. In a related study, Plutchik, Weiner, and Conte (1971) found that elderly females reported more frequent bodily discomforts and worries than did elderly males. When Plutchik, et al. (1973) asked persons from youth to old age to place dollar values on various parts of their bodies, males generally selected higher values than females (often ten times higher). In a nationwide study of liability cases reported by the Jury Verdict Research Corporation (1964), it was noted that women are less likely than men to file suit, and they are less likely to request or receive high awards. For example, the average male plaintiff who won a genital injury case was awarded $31,966; whereas, on the other hand, the average female plaintiff with genital damage was awarded $11,835. Differences in average awards for injured body parts were larger if the injuries were likely to affect earning potential. The present study was designed to determine whether or not there are differences in the development of values which children place on their bodies as a function of sex, grade, and race.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were 320 students attending two public schools in Dekalb County, Georgia. School administrators stated that both schools were located in similar low socio-economic level neighborhoods. Forty black males and forty black females, and forty white males and forty white females were randomly chosen from each of the two grade levels (third grade and sixth grade). If a teacher felt a particular child did not have an understanding of three-digit numbers the child was excluded.

Procedure

A Body Valuation Form was administered by the first author (a young female). She gave the following instructions:

> "Hi! My name is Sandra and I want to talk about insurance. You know what that is, don't you? Insurance is money that you get when you've been in an accident or when you've been hurt. Let's pretend that you were in an accident and a part of your body was hurt. Hurt so bad that it didn't work any more. I'm going to tell you the part of your body that's been hurt, and I want you to tell me how much money you would want the insurance company to give you for that part of your body. Do you all understand?
>
> I want you to write down how many dollars you think that part of your body that I name is worth. Now I'm going to hand out some papers with pictures on them for you to write your answers on. Don't anyone start until I tell you. Now remember, this isn't a test. I just want you to tell me how much money you think the different parts of your body are worth. Use any of the numbers on the blackboard. You can use any of the numbers more than one time

if you wish. Do you all understand?"

The Body Valuation Form had drawings of seven body parts: eye, leg, foot, hand, finger, arm, and ear. There was a blank space for the child to enter his or her response next to each of the drawings. Seven numbers, $0, $50, $150, $250, $350, $450, $550, were written on the blackboard. Fixed numbers were used in order to avoid the influence of extreme scores (e.g., "a million billion," etc.).

The responses of the students to each of the body parts on the Body Valuation Form were compared by means of a 2 X 2 X 2 analysis of variance. The overall difference in valuations as a function of sex was found to be statistically significant, F (1, 226) = 5.96, $p < .001$. Similar main effects were found for both grade and race: F (1, 226) = 2.23, $p < .05$; and F (1, 226) = 4.42, $p < .001$, respectively. Male children placed a higher monetary value on their body parts than did female children ($\bar{X}_m$ = \$306, $\bar{X}_f$ = \$230). Sixth grade children placed overall higher evaluations on their body parts than did third graders ($\bar{X}_6$ = \$294, $\bar{X}_3$ = \$242). Black children selected higher monetary evaluations than did white children ($\bar{X}_b$ = \$310, $\bar{X}_w$ = \$227). For the drawing of the hand only, a grade X race interaction was also statistically significant, F (1, 232) = 4.31, $p < .05$. A relatively high dollar value was placed on the hand by sixth grade black children.

The means and standard deviations of monetary values for the seven body parts as a function of group membership are presented in Table 1. The group means from highest to lowest were as follows: sixth grade black males ($\bar{X}$ = \$371); third grade black males ($\bar{X}$ = \$314); sixth grade black females ($\bar{X}$ = \$305); sixth grade white males ($\bar{X}$ = \$299); third grade black females ($\bar{X}$ = \$248); third grade white males ($\bar{X}$ = \$241); sixth grade white females

($\bar{X}$ = \$200); and third grade white females ($\bar{X}$ = \$167). Collapsing across race and looking only at the sex and grade of the children, the children who placed the highest monetary value on their body parts were the sixth grade males ($\bar{X}$ = \$335). This group is followed in decreasing value of body evaluation by third grade males ($\bar{X}$ = \$278), sixth grade females ($\bar{X}$ = \$252 and, lastly, third grade females ($\bar{X}$ = \$208). It is noteworthy that third grade boys chose higher body evaluations than did sixth grade girls.

Insert Table 1 about here

Inspection of Table 1 suggests that, with the exception of sixth grade black males, males indicated that their eye was their most valued body part. The sixth grade black males chose their arm as their most valued body part. Both races of female third graders chose the leg as their most valued body part. Black and white sixth grade females most valued, respectively, the eye and the ear. All children indicated that of the seven body parts, the finger was the least valuable.

Discussion

The present results are consistent with the general findings of prior research on sex-role stereotypes. The research literature supports the theory that women generally have a lower sense of body esteem than do men. Body esteem and self-esteem are positively correlated (Secord and Jourard, 1958; and Weinberg, 1960), and the relatively poor body image probably reflects the female's self-image. Since third grade boys valued their bodies more than did either the third or sixth grade girls, it may be assumed that differential valuations based on sex are established early in development. Although increases in evaluations were found with age, there

is a possibility that the increases reflect changes in children's ideas about money as well as the values of body parts. Although no grade X sex interaction was found, males showed more of an increase in body evaluation from the third grade to the sixth grade than did females. A suggestion for future research would be to administer the Body Valuation Form to males and females in older grades to determine whether or not the trends continue.

White children were expected to place higher values on their bodies than black children, but the opposite result was obtained. There are several possible explanations. The civil rights movement placed emphasis on black pride and culture. The sense of pride was reflected in the phrase, "black is beautiful." The sentiment was supported and fostered by many black parents and by such enterprises as black fashion magazines and black beauty pageants. There is also an emphasis by black youth on physical fitness. A great many of the black children that were tested were enrolled in some sort of Judo or Karate course; and this was not the case for the white children. Furthermore, as black children experience greater mobility and an increasing sense of control over their lives, there is likely to be greater self-esteem (and body esteem). The relationship between field-dependence and self-esteem has been documented in research by Reighard and Johnson (1973); and by Witkin, Dyk, Faterson, Goodenough, and Karp (1962). Finally, another explanation for the race difference relates to the socio-economic background of the children. The children in both schools came from low-income level families. The low-income white children may have compared themselves with the majority of the nation's white population, which is more afluent than the nation's black population, and therefore

experienced themselves as worth less than did the low-income black children. If there is a relationship between self-esteem and body esteem, it would be reasonable to expect these children to have a relatively lower sense of body esteem. Additional research on black and white children from other income level families would be helpful in determining whether or not this was an important factor in the present study.

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation Monetary Values for the Seven Body Parts as a Function of Group Membership

Group		Eye	Leg	Foot	Hand	Finger	Arm	Ear	(Overall)
3BM	$\bar{X}$	$385	$358	$268	$282	$189	$367	$348	$314
	SD	$199	$185	$190	$216	$201	$183	$211	
3WM	$\bar{X}$	$305	$258	$152	$268	$130	$298	$278	$241
	SD	$232	$186	$153	$217	$181	$191	$221	
3BF	$\bar{X}$	$274	$361	$208	$204	$134	$257	$298	$248
	SD	$173	$203	$162	$158	$179	$182	$190	
3WF	$\bar{X}$	$234	$239	$149	$137	$ 43	$146	$223	$167
	SD	$227	$189	$155	$194	$127	$146	$222	
6BM	$\bar{X}$	$407	$380	$311	$397	$277	$447	$378	$371
	SD	$174	$178	$199	$179	$206	$122	$183	
6WM	$\bar{X}$	$380	$371	$260	$238	$140	$370	$334	$299
	SD	$164	$179	$179	$186	$176	$180	$202	
6BF	$\bar{X}$	$383	$300	$280	$294	$189	$350	$340	$305
	SD	$186	$174	$204	$191	$198	$179	$194	
6WF	$\bar{X}$	$245	$265	$170	$166	$ 73	$209	$269	$200
	SD	$205	$192	$196	$186	$ 77	$195	$228	

Footnote

[1]Requests for reprints should be sent to Sandra L. Vaughan, Department of Psychology, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia 30303. The authors wish to express their appreciation to the children and staff of Midway and Tilson Schools of Dekalb County, Georgia. This paper was presented at the Southeastern Psychological Association convention in Atlanta, Georgia, March, 1978.

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